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bride of Christ? Why the two objectives in the incarnation and resurrection? Why the new day—the Day of Christ—with its rapture and resurrection of believers and with its rewards for service and suffering—a day never once mentioned in the Old Testament? Why the “mysteries” of the New Testament, including the body of Christ? Why the New Creation, comprising, as it does, all those who by the Spirit are joined to the Lord and are forever in Christ? How could there be a Church, constructed as she is, until the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, and the Day of Pentecost? How could the Church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, be any part of Israel in this or any other age?

Like the doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ, the doctrine of the true Church with her supernatural and exalted position and her heavenly destiny is largely omitted from theological writings only because these aspects of truth cannot be fitted into a Judaized system to which Systematic Theology has too often been committed. The stupendous spiritual loss of such an omission is only slightly reflected in the failure on the part of believers to understand their heavenly calling with its corresponding God-designed incentive to a holy life.

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER.

(To be concluded in the July number.)



THE PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING BARTH'S THEOLOGY¹

BY WILLIAM T. RIVIERE, D.D.

During and after the World War, a young Reformed pastor in Switzerland, who had been trained in Herrmann's variation of the theology of Ritschl and Schleiermacher, rethought his theology and began to proclaim a new message about God. Into a thought-world

¹No bibliography is offered with this paper. The remoteness of my manse from any theological library larger than my own would preclude completeness; and the Barthian literature is well known.

of man's culture that had failed, Karl Barth, prophet-like, thrust a John-the-Baptist finger pointed up to God. Our towers of Babel do not reach to heaven, he cried. God comes down to us: hear the word of God. This positive preaching of a transcendent God and of a word from on high is gaining a remarkable hearing in the world today. As Dr. Machen said five years ago, it addresses itself to every man.

Barth's books are not very easy to read, and they are still harder to understand. It is not merely that he writes in the German language; his translators take care of that difficulty with considerable success. But his whole intellectual background is so different from ours that, even with such sympathetic expositors as McConnachie, Rolston, and Lowrie at hand, an American finds it hard to grasp Barth's thought. As President W. L. Lingle wrote of Barth and his less difficult disciple Emil Brunner, "Even when they have been translated into English, they do not speak my language." To me Barth is both suggestive and irritating. One of his books I have read straight through four times, with profit each time. To a conservative Calvinist Barth's thought-forms are newer than his doctrine or his emphasis; but he is good reading. Much of his doctrine is new to the up-to-dateness of changing theological fashion, but quite familiar to those who read the standard American Presbyterians of a half-century ago.

This paper is an effort to sketch some outlines of Barth's teaching in relation to his metaphysics. There are two great influences to be discussed: first, the milieu of university speculative philosophy and theology against which he finally reacted; and second, Kierkegaard's system which not only contributes to Barth's thinking but also shapes a good deal of the verbal clothing of his thought. The formal study of philosophy receives more attention in Europe than over here. Barth's books abound in references to philosophers whose names appear, if at all, only in the footnotes to our college textbooks. There is a great deal of vain philosophy floating about in the world, and long has been. But there are

also earnest efforts to think the results of various branches of knowledge together into some kind of unity; every thoughtful man has some sort of philosophy; and the frame of one's everyday thinking and speaking is built out of his notions of reality, causation, value, and cosmic origin and goal. More than once Barth comments on the philosophizing vein in I Cor. 1:28; Rom. 1:20 is philosophy; and the prologue to John's gospel is theology in the language of philosophy.

Modern philosophy may be thought of as beginning with Descartes, a cautious Frenchman who moved into the free Netherlands three hundred years ago to publish his system. Descartes undertook, in his search for truth and reality, to try doubting everything, by way of testing the solidity of his knowledge. But in order to doubt you have to think; you could not think unless you existed. So he could not doubt the self, the soul: it must be accepted as certain. With this starting point, the existence of the human self that thinks, Descartes worked from man's mind up to a belief in God and down to belief in matter as well as mind.

After Descartes, various philosophers used his starting point as their springboard to dive in various directions. Many only recombined his ideas into different forms. For instance, Berkeley reduced everything to mind: we and all that we see are but thoughts in the mind of God. Leibniz, on the other hand, assigned some mind to every particle of matter in the universe. Both Berkeley and Leibniz were Christians. Spinoza contrived a different combination. He undertook to prove, starting like Descartes from the thinking of the mind (*Ethics*, Bk. I, Prop. vii, Proof), that God is all and all is God, which dilutes the idea of deity till nothing but the name remains. The method of argument is purely humanistic: if your mind cannot conceive of a thing do not believe in it.

Descartes was writing during the last part of the Thirty Years War. Toward the end of the American Revolution, over in Prussia Kant began to publish a series of books which have guided most German philos-

ophy and consequently a very large proportion of non-German philosophy ever since. We have two roads to knowledge, says Kant. From the starry heavens, that is from the field of natural science, we learn about the external world as it appears to us, though we remain ignorant of its real nature. From the moral law within, from our knowledge of right and wrong and our feelings of obligation and desert, we learn about God, freedom, and immortality. One might say that according to Kant, the mind furnishes colored spectacles (space and time),² and a frame (of categories), which have large part in our perceptions. Certainty is dependent upon the mind itself. This philosophy is built up like an inverted pyramid, on what man finds in himself. Unstable equilibrium lets it topple in one direction or another in the various Kantian and neo-Kantian systems.

Meanwhile quite a number of thoughtful people in every generation have managed to believe in God and the soul, in mind and matter, without this particular mental construction or the cumbersome procedure which Kant devised to prove its validity. Common sense philosophy is usually dualistic so far as the world of nature is concerned; it accepts two different kinds of reality, mind and matter. Above the world of nature is God, its Creator and Ruler. But that is too simple and plain for Kantian philosophy. Feuerbach, a sort of intellectual descendant of Kant with two left turns in the line of descent, wrote in 1841 that learning and philosophy merely get hold of treasures that were already hidden in man's heart. For Feuerbach there is no real God;

²Space and time to Kant are equipollent, not the $x y z$ of 3 dimensions in space with the t of time made into a 4th dimension of a space-time continuum, as in that popular interpretation of modern mathematics which makes x , y , z , and t all 4 coordinate with one another. To Kant, who was interested in mathematics, t would have been as important in its own right as x , y , and z together. The other day a friend gave my little boy an advertising device in which toy spectacles, with a blue "glass" for one eye and red for the other, change the appearance of certain pictures. For Kant the blue and the red are space and time through which we cannot help looking. By the way, Barth makes excellent use of mathematical illustrations, such as *plus*, *minus*, and *zero* on a line; *infinity in ratio*; *perpendiculars*, *curves*, and *intersections*; and the *minus sign* before a parenthesis.

you cannot find God in nature unless you first put him there in your own thought (Brehier, *Hist. Phil.* II, 788); God is just a wish-being! Freud, inventor of psychoanalysis, follows Feuerbach in his account of religious ideas. Freud and Jung claim that people believe in God just because such belief is comforting.

Professor Brehier (see his *Hist. Phil. Allemande*, pp. 149, 180ff), asserts that Feuerbach's attempt to reduce God and all that we find outside ourselves to something within ourselves, namely to something which we put outside by thinking or wishing it outside, is in the traditional rhythmic swing of German thought. This rhythm, which the French scholar traces back to Jacob Boehme and through him to Proclus and neo-Platonism, the Sorbonne professor connects with "a restlessness of mind that keeps it from leaving things where they belong." German metaphysical thinkers have "unequaled skill at putting unlike things together and separating things that are alike; the great post-Kantian metaphysicians especially leave the impression of a great overturn where, on the ruins of the world as we know it, the mind rises up in complete freedom. Subject and object, the Me and things, mix together; philosopher seeks self in things as he seeks things in himself. . . . What is German dialectic, the most characteristic product of this genius, except the endless alternation of suppressions and rebirths of this feeling of restlessness? Mind loses itself in things, then finds itself there to lose itself again."

There we have an account of the German dialectic method by a Frenchman who lost an arm in the World War. The Swiss Barth is a preacher rather than a systematizer, although until just now a theological professor in Germany; but his teaching is often called the dialectic theology. Indeed, an advertisement for the recent French translation of his book, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*,³ speaks of the book as put-

³The German title reads *Theology* instead of *Word of Man*; theology is regarded as man's attempt to understand and explain what God has said.

ting the "French reader into direct contact with the thought of the most celebrated of the 'dialectic theologians,' a thought which will mark the spiritual physiognomy of our time deeply."

The most famous dialectic method in Germany was Hegel's. Hegel sets two contradictory statements in opposition; then he goes on above or behind them to some higher synthesis of statement. Hegel illustrates what might be called the rhythm of German monism: there is one Absolute Reality, from which we come and to which we must ultimately return. Religiously, all started from God the Creator and we, separated from God (by sin as Barth would say), seek to return to Him. Barth's dialectic is quite different from Hegel's. Let us try to get some notion of Hegel's method, which was in the philosophical environment of Kierkegaard; because Barth's method owes much to Kierkegaard.

Hegel takes his start from the notion of Being, of existence. We think in terms of being. A thing is, or is possible, or is hypothetical, or is impossible, or is large or small, or is present or future. That is his positive statement, a thesis. But Hegel finds contradiction there, the antithesis that nothing can be, can exist, without being something. Unless a thing is something it is not, does not exist. Mere Being without being anything is Not-being. Hegel goes on to reconcile this contradiction by the synthesis of Becoming. If a thing is in process of becoming, it both is what it is and also is not yet what it will be. The contradiction is resolved because it is and is not at the same time! And so Hegel goes on with more dialectic: thesis, antithesis, and solution of the contradiction by a synthesis which becomes the thesis of the next step.

A century ago the intellectual world of Germany found rest in this kind of philosophy! Only a few decades ago Hegelianism was riding high in England. Why, Bradley founded a system of philosophy on this principle: If a thing may be and also must be, then it is! May one not remark that speculative metaphysics is about as risky as speculative investments? Specula-

tion is uncertain because it depends upon the way things look to the speculator rather than upon provable certainty.

Now we come to Sören Kierkegaard, whose influence on Barth has been very great. Eighty or ninety years ago this melancholy Dane (Was he consciously imitating Shakespeare's Hamlet, of whom Copenhagen is so proud? Remember the Byronic fashion of that quarter-century) was publishing striking and powerful books on philosophy and religion. He bitterly despised the popular Hegelian philosophy which goes on and goes on. His discourse on Abraham, in an original style imitated by Barth and Thurneysen in their volume of sermons just published in English (*Come Holy Spirit*; the German title is *Come Creator Spirit*), underlines the immense difference of quality between man and God, between time and eternity. See, for example, Hollander's translations from Kierkegaard, easily available in University of Texas Bulletin No. 2326, July, 1923, especially pp. 170 and 34f. You cannot, he says, argue from man up to God without committing the logical error of passing over into a different category in your conclusion; you cannot have a conclusion different in quality from your premises. (Query: may you not argue toward if not to God?). Kierkegaard distinguishes between the world of matter, in which we live, and the world of spirit where an eternal and divine order obtains. His style, often brilliant, is full of irony, indirection, and paradox. His writings are real literature, free from the arid clumsiness of so much of Kant's argumentation, or of Hegel's.

Kierkegaard's voluminous works, whether on practical ethics or on theology, attracted only local attention during his lifetime. The attention he received was hardly directed toward the ferment he wanted to introduce in the hope of restoring the vigor of Christianity. In fact, in his first great work, *Either-Or*, the "Diary of a Seducer" was more convincingly written than the stern ethical discourse which it introduces. The Diary, in consequence, won more readers, and was attractively

translated into French in 1929. This "Seducer's Diary" is free from lurid detail. Kierkegaard lived in Denmark and published his works in Danish, often pseudonymously, and at his own expense. Recently they have been translated and commented upon, widely in German, to some extent in France, and still less in our own country. Probably many Americans know Kierkegaard only through references in Höffding's *Philosophy of Religion*, or in his *History of Modern Philosophy*; many Frenchmen only through the same or through Höffding's book on Rousseau and his philosophy, in which Kierkegaard is grouped with Pascal, Rousseau, and Carlyle. Barth classes him as a religious genius along with Luther and Ignatius of Loyola. It occurs to me that some of Kierkegaard's favorite ideas, including contemporariness, may be related to Thorwaldsen's great statue of a Scandinavian Christ, which was put on exhibition in Copenhagen even before *Either-Or* was published.

Kierkegaard, who finally was nicknamed "Either-Or" on the streets of Copenhagen, was not interested in the Cartesian distinction between matter and mind. He undertook to contrast the aesthetic or pleasure-seeking life with the ethical life; but he came to see that ethical is not enough; the true contrast is with the religious-ethical or Christian life. His world of matter, thrall to indifference (moral indifference?), where everything belongs to whosoever happens to possess it, is, like the carnal mind, the antithesis to spirit. He sees the gulf, not between matter and mind, but between (1) man, made up of both matter and mind and existing in time, and (2) eternity, the home of God and of spirit. This we shall find reappearing almost exactly in Karl Barth.

Kierkegaard found little hope of progress in the mind itself. Unlike Barth, he ignored contemporary reform movements. Evolution as a philosophy of progress would have found no welcome from him; he saw too many weaknesses in human nature and in himself: "As against God we are always in the wrong."

Readers of Barth know his fondness for Paul's ex-

pression, "with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii, 12; cf. Eph. vi, 5 and II Cor. vii, 15; also I Cor. ii, 3); one of Kierkegaard's major works was entitled *Fear and Trembling*, and it contains his great panegyric on Abraham, eloquent with what Hollander calls his "strange union of dialectic subtlety and intense lyrical power and passion." A characteristic position of Kierkegaard's is that "only that truth which edifies is truth for you," which is almost exactly the Barthian position that Lowrie explains by quoting Coleridge on the truth which "finds me."⁴ Another position of Kierkegaard's is that the possibility of proof in religion is an illusion, and doubt cannot be overcome by reason. Still another is that eternal salvation cannot be based on any historical event.⁵ This view, widespread among Barthians, goes back to the permeating influence of that many-sided genius Lessing. As for me, I do not see why an event of cosmic importance taking place in the Kierkegaard-Barth eternity should not produce recognizable historical results in time.

Kierkegaard offers this great paradox of faith: Truth is not innate in man, but man has the ability to grasp it when it is presented to him. The Teacher who presents the truth is of absolute infinite importance,—the Godhead himself, communicating directly with man, revealing the truth in the shape of man. The Teacher has traveled the infinite distance from God to man to reveal this truth. To get God's truth, he says, you must believe Jesus, the lowliest of men. Today as when Jesus was on earth in the form of man, faith is born of the same condition, "the resolute acceptance by the individual of the absolute paradox."

Look more closely at Kierkegaard's idea of eternity, which Barth has taken over. Think of time as a straight line, which you may draw on the margin of this page.

⁴See a very interesting interview with Barth reported by Dr. Barnhouse in the January, 1934, issue of *Revelation*. This monthly, Donald Grey Barnhouse, editor, is published in Philadelphia; address Drexel Bldg. It is not hard to find one's own beliefs in such an attractive and ambiguous writer as Barth.

⁵Hollander, p. 26 and p. 167 *passim*. For a contrary view, see Vos, *Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, p. 18ff.

For convenience mark one point on the line, and count the years to the left as B. C., to the right as A. D. Go back in B. C. to creation; time prior to that was eternity past, which you may represent by a row of dots prolonging your line to the edge of the page and beyond. Follow A. D. to the right to 1933, add as many years as you please, ages and ages of ages; beyond that the line will dot out into eternity future. That is what eternity means to most of us. Now for Kierkegaard and Barth eternity is not only at the ends of the line but also above, below, behind, and in front. Eternity is not the unmeasurable ends of time but something greater than time, near to time as well as far away, enveloping time. A man lives in time, walking along by a high wall. At intervals (through God's grace as Barth says, for the wall is humanly impassable), there are openings in the wall through which the man may glimpse eternity and even enter eternity. More accurately, eternity may come through into time to him. Again I protest that the Dane & Swiss Co. do not interpret their own philosophy correctly; when eternity passes through the wall and enters time, is not the result an event in history? and will not history record something of value, even if not all? for the historian who has no glimpse through the wall can see that something happens to the man who stands by the opening and receives the impact of eternity. In a lecture delivered in 1920 ("The Word of God and the Word of Man," ch. iii, *Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas*; p. 62f, tr. Horton) Barth illustrates the very thing I mean by his description of our curiosity when from a window we see people stop and look up at something hidden from us by the roof. We in our window cannot see what they see; but we know that they are looking, we know when and where they stand as they look, we see the general direction of their gaze, and we see the result, whether they cry out and point, or run, or look on.

One of Karl Barth's teachers was Wilhelm Herrmann, disciple of Ritschl and more remotely of Schleiermacher whom one of my preceptors used to call the father of all

the modern heresies. Under the German university system there is a great premium upon new work, which in theology ordinarily means some novelty. Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Herrmann all follow the Cartesian-Kantian tradition and work out their theology and religion from the human mind rather than in dependence upon an external revelation. As the late A. C. McGiffert showed (*Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, pp. 188-196), Schleiermacher was one of the group with Lessing and Herder who undertook to import Spinoza's pantheism into Christianity, and to give it a dominant place in so-called Christian theology as a doctrine of divine immanence, the thought or feeling of God as everywhere and in everything. But Herrmann seems to admit a little of that incommensurability between the human mind and divine truth which is Barth's starting point. This is Kierkegaard's absolute difference of quality between time, our dwelling place, and eternity, the home of God. Hegel presents man at his best as the highest form of the Absolute, that is, of God. Schleiermacher in his theology undertook to mediate between, first, the kind of speculative philosophy which was to produce Hegel and, second, the Christianity of the New Testament as contained in those dogmas of the church which he accepted. Barth very properly challenges these human towers of man at his best and man's consciousness of the divine and man's choice among traditional doctrines. Take man at his best if you will; but God is still entirely otherwise, *totaliter aliter*. The legitimacy of that scrap of scholastic Latin may be open to suspicion, but the meaning is plain, and the translators render it Wholly Other, Altogether Other. "You can *not*," said Barth to his fellow-pastors, "speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice." R. Otto has been given credit for the description of God as "the all Other," *ganz Andere* as over against the world and us and the human in general.

Read Feuerbach, Barth says, to see how futile is any unaided human effort to figure out God. Feuerbach argues that if you follow Schleiermacher, then feeling

is your only way of knowing God, for in that system feeling is the organ of the infinite. "As certainly as I exist, so certainly does my feeling exist; and as certainly as my feeling exists, so certainly does my God exist." Read that and such as that, says Barth, and see how little distance you gain toward God by a purely philosophical approach. Yet Herrmann's other pupil Professor John Baillie, more faithful to his teacher's ordinary method, tries to construct a belief in God by working back from the moral order of the universe as we know it to an intelligent moral personality that controls the universe (*The Interpretation of Religion*, pp. 390f, *passim*). Another "liberal," in the *Christian Century*, Nov. 8, 1933, p. 1403, puts the same humanistic approach to theism in this way; "the premise of liberalism is faith in man and his highest values as the clue to the nature of God."

Let the weary reader now refresh himself with a draught of God's Word. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision cried one to another: "Holy, Holy, Holy is Jehovah of Hosts"; that is, Transcendent, High, and Lifted Up, Set Apart from mankind is the Eternal. The praise of the seraph to his Maker and Ruler went on: "The whole earth is full of His glory"; that is, not only does His train fill the temple, not only do the heavens declare His glory and the expanse show the work of His hands, but the earth on which men dwell is upheld by His everlasting arms and He is not far from each one of us. God is both transcendent and immanent. God is far above yet very near.

Now into a thought-world that held only a mutilated Bible, torn and shrunk and made very small by the human machinery of radical Biblical criticism, Barth threw a missile. Into the camp of man-devised sub-Christianities that felt able to climb up to God, up to whatever God there might happen to be, Karl Barth hurled a phosphorus grenade that burns and burns and burns. "God is in heaven, thou upon earth!" You cannot build a tower to reach Him. You cannot fully understand Him. Tower-building ends in Babel. God is not like

man but different. The difference is not merely metaphysical but moral. You are not merely a creature but a sinful creature. If a man finds God, it is because God's bolt of lightning from above has struck him. The initiative is always with God.

Welcome, thrice welcome to this proclamation of truth! For those whose garments smell of "modernism"—and they may have drawn it into their lungs—this preaching of the divine transcendence and of the divine initiative is a needed corrective. It is more than the pinch of spice which was Barth's description of his message; it is a breath of fresh air! It is more than a breath; it is a fresh atmosphere! It is pine-laden breeze from the mountains, with the smell of high balsam-clad peaks! The word *God* has meaning and value again. No man-made God will do. The profane man weakens his idea of God by continually associating God with *damn* and the like; when he wants to pray, the damns and the filth tag along with the word by which he tries to climb. The pantheistic Spinozist, if he follows his leader, past nature at work and nature being worked on, to God, associates the word God with vagueness: all is God, God is all; God is everything, God is anything; and the idea of God is dissolved into an allness without meaning. There are evolutionists of religion who imagine the God of the Bible as growing from a local thunder god of Mt. Sinai into a tribal henotheistic deity and gradually up to a universal paternal goodwill taught by a good man of profound insight named Jesus. To all these, and to us who let the brightness grow dull on our own words, Barth cries: God is far up yonder; humble your heart and hope that He will come to you.

Barth has caught the oft-missed distinction between a child's faith, which is sweet and trustful and unafraid, and the faith of an adult who has learned to give up pride and self-trust and reliance on his own strength; he has learned to humble himself so as to trust God as a child trusts. All the sweetness and confidence and freedom from fear that mark the child's faith come, perhaps slowly ("help Thou mine unbelief!"), to the

man who realizes the weakness of his manhood and, no longer trying to stand on his own feet surrenders himself like a child to the lifting arms of God.

Barth has not yet freed himself from the low modernism of his prewar views of the Bible. His admirers represent him as accepting the results of modern criticism. In some cases he does accept. But I find irony not unlike Kierkegaard's in these four quotations from his Aarau Student Conference address in 1920: "What is the secret of the man—call him a copyist who will!—who could baffle a historical dissecting expert by the genius he used in combining the two major sections of the two books of Isaiah into *one*?" "One with an eye original enough to combine the old and the new—the author of the First Gospel." "What matters it whether figures like Abraham and Moses are products of later myth-making—believe it who can!" "The Bible without the *absolute* miracle is simply *not* the Bible. Some day people will smile at the pictures of Jesus which we have made acceptable to the cultured by purging them of miracle, even more than our eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have smiled at the miracle stories." I have just read a volume of sermons by Barth and his friend Thurneysen; the individual authorship of none of the twenty-five sermons is indicated.⁶ Apparently Barth is just not interested in that sort of thing. He has studied modernistic Old and New Testament Introduction, suspects the method of confounding hypothesis with conclusion and of superficiality, but regards the whole business as in the realm of history in time and consequently below the level of his chief interests.

Unfortunately he lacks a firm wide doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, though to him they contain the Word of God. He cares mainly for the *geradezu prophetische Bedeutsamkeit* of the Bible's contents. If

⁶I hazard the opinion that, while he might not care to argue the matter, Barth would approve the viewpoint back of such arguments as that of the late William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, pp. 119-125, or of that delightful little book,—by Bishop Whateley, was it not?—which set forth historic doubts as to the existence of Napoleon.

Barth were to let himself be pinned to specific answers, some such dialog as this might take place:

Question:—Has God spoken? Barth:—Yes, God has spoken.

Q.—Where? B.—In the Incarnation, in the Cross (death), and especially in the Resurrection.

Q.—How do we learn this? B.—From God's Word, when it is *God's* Word to *you*, but only by His Spirit.

Q.—What does God tell us? B.—If you believe or are willing to believe, hope earnestly that God will vouchsafe the truth to you through His Word and Spirit. It is a word of eternity.

That dialog represents my own interpretation of what Barth seems to be saying in his books. The interpretation is not quite that of any of his interpreters whose writings are in my study. Like some others he is ready to take what he wants from the Bible and neglect the rest, as you select items in a cafeteria and leave the full counter when you sit down to eat. I think Barth would object to my language about taking what he wants; he would say that the Word of God, in, from, or through the Bible, took him. By the way, Barth has a curious and increasing reverence for his church's tradition and sacrament.

It is not easy to find out exactly what Barth believes about objective details. Hence his eschatology is indefinite, a subject to which I shall return in a few paragraphs. Though he courageously opposes humanism of any sort in his doctrine of God and in his doctrine of salvation, in his doctrine of the Word he leaves a postern gate unguarded. If a modernist argued that "the ultimate authority in religion must rest with the insight of the individual," Barth would have a reply that is logically lame, although couched in terms of faith, of internal witness of the Spirit, and of what he calls "the vexing thought of election." For Barth fails to claim the whole Bible as the Word of God. He makes the Bible a shell, the Word the enclosed kernel. The Bible is the cradle in which Christ is laid, quotes Brunner from Luther; but *merely the cradle*, insists every

Barthian I have read after or conversed with except one Texas fellow-pastor. How glad Brunner is that Luther called James, that tract full of echoes from the sermon on the mount, an epistle of straw!

Yet for Barth the Word of God is a message from the world of eternity. It crosses the impassable gulf and breaks into time. It comes by grace. God's grace speaks to us. Grace makes us ready to hear. Grace convinces the heart.

Barth's queer doctrine of election seems to be a last refuge when pursued by hard questions. If asked such questions as: Why does A believe when B does not? Why does C find joy and peace in his faith while D has doubts and struggles? Why do not all Christians agree with your resurrection doctrine? Barth seems to reply, "God's election; ask no more."

The Resurrection is a favorite topic with Barth. For him the Easter message is the theme of the Bible. But after carefully studying his book, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, which is an outline of the first fifteen chapters of First Corinthians and an exposition of the fifteenth chapter, I find it difficult to understand what he means by resurrection of the body.⁵

Speaking of the difficulty of understanding Paul's individual thoughts and of following the movement of

⁵I have heard a distinguished professor of systematic theology in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., describe Barth's "you can't do it; God does," as Calvinism that would make Calvin roll over three times and break out if there's a way out. He says that to the Barthians God can be known only by His revelation in Christ, but their Christology is weak. They fall off the track because to them Jesus is masked and unknown, God incognito; the revelation of God is not open, hence their Christology is ambiguous. This professor has built a whole system of theology by working out the logic of the definition of God in the Westminster confession; he interprets the decrees of God in terms of the plan of God and the divine initiative; and he puts the doctrine of the Bible last in his arrangement.

⁶Can Pauck's interpretation of what Barth means by resurrection (p. 74 of Pauck's book on Barth) be correct? See *Barth's Resurrection of the Dead*, tr. Stenning, p. 106f, translated also in Lowrie, pp. 176-8; also Barth's *Romans*, tr. Hoskyns, pp. 203f, 210. If Barth does believe in the continued personal existence of the believer whose body lies in the graveyard, I wish he would say so. Dr. Rolston, *Union Seminary Review*, Jan., 1934, p. 162, now seems to agree with Pauck, and quotes that passage from p. 74, to which I have just referred. This book review of Rolston's reached me during my final revision of this MS. for publication.

his thought, Barth frankly admits that "We are probably (and not only historically) too far away from Paul to be able to approach him here, even approximately" (Stenning's tr., p. 112). By corporeal resurrection Barth certainly does not mean what we ordinarily speak of at funerals. He omits any discussion of "the third day," I Cor. xv, 4, which ties the event Paul discusses into time and history.⁹ His idea is close to something in Rom. vi. He is supernaturalistic in the main, but not in detail. Probably Barth sympathizes with Bergson in the difficulty of schematizing the living fluidity of consciousness. He has a similar difficulty, it seems to me, in discussing the living contact of time and eternity in the resurrection. As he says, you cannot picture a flying bird. Paul left no films for a slow motion picture. Barth speaks of Paul's "impetuous crowding metaphorical language," p. 164. In the same sentence he says that Paul "had developed here no eschatological mythology." That sentence is a part of his comment on I Cor. xv, 20-28.

At the end of section 3, chapter iii of this book of Barth's I tried to collect part of his meaning into a diagram and some notes in the margin. Above is a large circle, Eternity where God is Lord, "His world, a world of Spirit"; below, a smaller circle, Time, "earthly world," tangent to the other at the point Resurrection. The man in the lower circle equals, says Barth, *soma* (body) plus *psyche* (mind) plus a pinch of *pneuma* (spirit); but the whole sum as an algebraic function of body is just man, and may be called *soma*, body. At

⁹Professor Wm. C. Robinson had a note on this in *Christianity Today*, March, 1933, p. 17. Dr. Robinson's article in the *Union Seminary Review*, XL, 1, Oct., 1928, p. 121, correctly points out two great defects in Barth's position, weakness as to the inspiration of the Scriptures and as to the meaning of the death of Christ; it also speaks of "the elusiveness of Barth's words—one is never sure how far he is using the older terminology in the orthodox sense."

resurrection it gets over into the upper circle of *pneuma*, of spirit, of God. Man's pinch of *pneuma* has come to him, apparently from above. This looks like an effort to speak of eternal life, which is so plainly presented by John as a divine gift and a present possession. Is Barth proleptic, or is this another paradox?

Here is a much easier paradox, the statement of the preachers' difficult situation which is the theme of Barth's address to a convention of ministers in 1922: "As ministers we ought to speak of God. We are human, however, and so cannot speak of God. Therefore we ought to recognize both *our obligation and our inability* and by that very recognition give God the glory." Gaius Glenn Atkins, in an illuminating short paper in the now defunct *Presbyterian Magazine* for Dec., 1932, p. 593, remarks on Barth's fondness for italics. The paradox just quoted is all italicized with the keywords further emphasized in Barth's *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. He uses italics or rather the corresponding trick of German typography with great effectiveness. In writing about him one is tempted to use them too.

With Paul the twin doctrines of death and resurrection travel together. Barth's resurrection teaching outweighs all that he says about death, and he has a great deal to say about death. To him the Cross means Nay to this and that, or it is simply death as a necessary step to life, or it means cross-bearing, or it refers to the example of Christ. In part of what Barth says about the Cross, I seem to taste a bit of Schleiermacher's horse-radish (experience instead of content, feeling in place of fact). I hope that I am mistaken, or that Barth will leave off the horse-radish and stick to bread and meat, seasoned with his spice of God's transcendent

sovereignty. One thing is sure: Barth is not in the dairy business.¹⁰

Dr. Holmes Rolston in a personal letter suggests a comparison of the Barthian eschatology with that of the premillennialists. *Pace* Dr. Barnhouse, such a comparison is almost impossible, for the two schools of thought on this subject are as far apart as poetry and trigonometry. Only God can save the world, insists Barth. So far he and the premillennialists are together; nor are they the only passengers on the train. But trigonometry and poetry, though taught in the same high school, are quite unlike. It is true that trigonometry uses numbers and a few numbers occur in the study of the rhythms and meters of classic versification. But mathematics and poetry are studied in different departments and Barth is as different from the faculty of the Evangelical Theological College in his expectations as angle is different from angel or logarithm from log of wood.

Barth often speaks of hope. He is free from the postmillennial optimism. He does not confuse progress or evolution with the kingdom of God. Of the return of the Lord he speaks even more vaguely than Kierkegaard (in *Preparation for a Christian Life*, part I, under "The Pause," question a; Hollander p. 165). He

¹⁰Barth's meaning is understood to be nearer some sort of objective atonement by McConnachie, *Signif. K. B.*, p: 155ff, *Barthian Theol.*, 236 ff, 181, 137; and by Rolston, *A Conservative Looks to Barth and Brunner*, p. 126f. But they interpret Barth by Brunner. In his second book McConnachie shows some divergencies between the two. In the author's preface to the recent translation of his *Romans* Barth asks his English readers "not to look at me simply through the spectacles of Emil Brunner, not to conform me to his pattern."

In the 1920 Student Conference Lecture quoted above, Barth does say "that in the sacrifice of Christ the sacrifice demanded of us is *made* once and for all, that we ourselves *are* sacrificed; and that we therefore have no more sacrifice to *bring*"; but the sentence seems utterly out of place in the context, like a page of the Shorter Catechism bound up in a fairy story. Many of the most "orthodox" sentences in Barth's books, especially in *Romans*, are quotations without comment. Moreover he has a peculiar notion of identity or union; see, for example, in the *Romans*, tr. Hoskyns, pp. 309, 329.

In his new volumes on Church Dogmatics, we are told, Barth will write elaborately on God in Creation, on God in Reconciliation (work of Christ), and on God in Deliverance (work of the Spirit; for *deliverance* instead of *redemption*, see Warfield, *Bib. Doc.*, p. 388 *passim*).

has said a great deal about a millennium which he pictures, or at one time pictured, as a sort of Christian socialist world-order with an increasing notion of the supernatural worked in. He has^d even written what I dare call his Beatitudes of Hope (from an address, "The Problem of Ethics Today," made in Sept., 1922, to a company of ministers; *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 162f). Let me present^t them in a condensed form:

Happy is the man who, though he knows that the millennium is remote, clings to its reality, because nothing else gives meaning to his pictures of the future.

Happy is he who does not delude himself, but recognizes that nothing he does can bring it in.

Happy is he who perceives that he, *man*, is powerless, but who does not deny his hope.

Happy is he who goes down with colors flying, true to himself and to that for which he longs.

That does not sound as if the author of those beatitudes even knows that there is a twentieth chapter of Revelation! He has described the millennium of that chapter as not an island of the blest but the kingdom of saints and martyrs built over the bottomless pit in which the old dragon is chained. My premillennialist friends receive the whole Bible as the Word of God. They study it all. They classify the data, group their findings as to predicted events and their relative order of occurrence, trace highways of prophecy through the Scriptures, and try to fit all the indications into a connected scheme. Barth has an entirely different notion of the dependence to be placed on Bible predictions. He lacks that kind of certainty as to particular items. He might say: Isaiah or John sees a vision; that is the word of God. The man draws a picture of what he has seen; this imperfect document is the Bible. A pastor with his scissors cuts out the picture and pastes it on the window pane; its shadow is his sermon; and at best the hearer draws the outline of the shadow on his heart. Granted that Barth stresses a work of the Spirit with preacher and hearer, nevertheless his method, which I

think I have represented fairly, loses all the exact details of the original vision. Precision gives way to penumbral doubt. Therefore his eschatology lacks well-defined details. Nevertheless his hope is real; his hope is located in what the world calls future time; and his hope is for divine intervention.

Barth's system is called the theology of crisis. He loves to describe man as walking dangerously on a narrow ridge, a knife-edge of rock between two chasms. Moral and spiritual life is perpetual crisis, tension, strain. The dialectic theology is this perpetual balancing up where nothing is between earth-rock and sky, where time is tangent to eternity. The paradox is the collision of two contradictory truths, not flatly supporting a new Hegelian synthesis that reconciles their contradiction, but by the impact of their collision throwing up the sharp and deadly ridge. The mountaineer pilgrim on the narrow ridge is in peril of judgment; misstep means fall.

Barth is coveted as an ally by divers schools. Each of his admirers, of whatever theological complexion, finds a good deal of himself in Barth. Barth's dialectic method often involves contradictory statements which mark points on this side of the wall that separates us from the yonside of eternity. Like a flowerbed hidden from us by the wall, the truth is supposed to lie on the other side somewhere between the marked points. Erich Schaefer (*Theozentrische Theologie*, 3rd ed., 1925, p. 216), speaks of Barth's "continual talk about a possibility that is impossibility, and an impossibility that is possibility. You enter a Magic Forest of dialectic turns and denying yeas, *verneinender Bejahungen*. Whoever is acquainted with Kierkegaard also knows the trees that grow in that Forest."

Barth holds to a real revelation, although toning it down by a method risky because it has no objective standard of attainable truth. But in spite of its weakness (up to now) with regard to the meaning of the Cross, and its lack of precision in some matters, Barth's theology is a valuable contribution to our age. This

sketch takes no cognizance of many good things that he says, such as his suggestive ideas about sanctification and about forgiveness and about duty. But his theology has glorious emphasis on God's transcendence, not forgetting His nearness; on man's need, including the effect of sin; on the resurrection power; and not merely on the ever-present crisis, or perhaps it would be better to say the oft-recurring crisis of judgment, but also on a future of divine catastrophic intervention.

A pastor, even though he reads a good bit of old and current philosophy and of queer theology, has to wade through pools of aberrant logic muddied by eccentric statement and has to finger yards of embroidered error in order to find the origin of these main lines of direction. But after you read and reread Barth, fine thoughts come out of his pages. For example, he reminds us that though it is urgent that a man become, be, and remain like a tree planted by the rivers of water, it is no less urgent that he bring forth his fruit in due season. Reading about Barth has some value. Reading Barth has more. But, as Dr. William M. Anderson wisely says, it is better to read Matthew and Mark. The bright child who amuses himself too often by spelling words wrong at home may cause himself to lose out in the spelling-match. Unorthodox books may help us preachers more than tame orthodoxy, but it is never wise to omit daily contact with the Truth.

Much of Barth's preaching of truth may be new in his environment but is not unusual over here. On the first page of *The Christian Century Pulpit* for Dec., 1933, in a sermon by Dr. F. F. Shannon, we find: "the connecting passageway from the domain of physics to a whole new domain of life is the Word which became flesh nearly two thousand Christmases ago." True, well-put, not startling. The two domains, the connecting passageway of Jesus the Word, the divine initiative are as Barthian as they are orthodox, and yet are not abnormal modernism. James Moffatt's *Grace in the New Testament* asserts the divine initiative as definitely as does President Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Grace*.

But Barth preaches these things with such a positive ring of conviction! Brunner agrees with him, is more methodical in the employment of dialectic paradox, and being less original seems closer to our forms of thought. But Barth seems to have a passionate conviction of God, Eternal and Lofty Triune God, sending His lightning flashes of revelation and power to us, and sending Jesus to save. In these things, of course, Barth is right. We who think so should be glad.

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